

Touches And Balance

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Touches And Balance by mxgicxltrxgedy

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Summary:

Stan and Mike's relationship and their simplest touches. This all describes their true balance.

Touches And Balance

Mike started hanging out with the losers (or so they called themselves) after the rock fight with Henry, Vic, and Belch. Stan was fine and good, even better, when Mike started hanging out with them. Sure, Bill, Eddie, Richie, Ben, Bev were all bullied by, well, everyone. Stan was given the worst of Henry Bowers's mind, Stan had his face shoved in the snow to see if it would make him whiter by any means. Stan didn't understand why (and he wouldn't remember he was bullied at all as soon as he went to college), but when Mike was describing what Henry Bowers's gang did to him Stan knew it because it was the same. It was the first thing that connected them- discrimination was the worst thing to connect with, but it was the truth. Stan and Mike saw each other a little clearer after Mike was inducted into their little group.

Mike was good, in Stan's eyes. All of the losers were good but Mike was good too.

Mike talked. When Stan and Mike hung out alone in the Barrens before everyone else got there- it was a little awkward because they hadn't hung out on their own before, and Stan did the only thing he knew to do (in his anxious mind) he spoke about the birds he saw.

The species of birds, their defining features, and their regions. Mike listened- but everyone listened, they pretended to, but Mike engaged. Mike asked questions and spoke his own anecdotes about birds that he's seen on his farm, though he wasn't one to pay attention to the random animals that appeared on his farm (too often he was worrying about the animals his family took care of rather than the ones that showed up on his farm).

Mike had cracks in his hands and Mike had no idea how Stan's hands stayed so clean, pure, perfect.

When Stan and Mike held hands for the first time it was a weird balance. It was weird and perfect all the same- so much so that later they couldn't explain it, either to themselves or each other. The first time they experienced it was when they were still in middle school. They were playing tag in the barrens, running around the knee high

grass and trying to make sure that Richie remained It-

(Not it. Not it. Not it.)

the tagger. Richie was going after Stan and Stan was slowing down, trying his hardest not to and suddenly from the side Mike holds out his hand and Stan takes it. They run back around past Richie as he was still running forward. As soon as Richie realized what Stan and Mike had done he dug his heels into the dirt and tried to turn around to give chase again.

Stan and Mike continued to hold hands as they ran away, laughing at the look that Richie pulled when Stan and Mike ran the opposite way. Bill and Eddie raced by (with Eddie getting tagged). Eddie ran after Bill, his fanny pack bouncing on his waist. Stan and Mike's fingers intertwined felt nice, though they didn't know why.

They stayed connected through the rest of their tag game and when the sky around them began to become dark. Mike and Stan only let go when they went to grab the handles on their bikes. Stan almost didn't realize until he got home (getting ready to wash his hands twice before supper- as he always did). He looked at the smudge marks on his hands that were too dry and too red to be the dirt at the Barrens.

Stan was familiar with the dirt, seeing it all over Mike's worn Henley shirts, and his jeans, and the tires of his bike. He thought of where he got it and sort of smiled? Stan felt warm looking at the grime smear rather than scared and disgusted, but still, Stan scrubbed of the dirt with his anti-bacterial soap

(twice)

and sat down with his family at dinner eating and talking with his father about his day (excluding the funny feeling Stan felt in his diaphragm when he realized Mike held his hand- that felt like it was only for him and Mike).

It was in Bill's room next. The seven of them sitting on Bill's floor, playing board games and arguing with each other. It was a game of catch phrase where Stan and Mike were screaming at Eddie words so

that they could pass the game to the other team.

“When you drink something?!”

“Water!”

“Thirsty!”

“No! No! Spit or?!”

“What does this have to do with-“

“Goddammit! What happens when you suck a dick?!”

“SWALLOW!”

Richie screamed at Eddie and Eddie tossed the word sheet to Bev who was bent over laughing too hard to take it for her team. Ben shrieked a laugh, wheezing from laughing. Stan leaned over into the floor to cover his face from laughing so hard.

Stan leaned into Mike so that his forehead was resting on Mike's thigh. Mike's pajamas weren't dirty- they were clean and a blue plaid and of flannel fabric, soft against Stan's face. Stan continued to laugh stretched his arms out and held onto Mike's arm to keep himself steady and stable. Mike was that- steady and stable, and tonight he wasn't dirty. Stan, as a simple and uncertain act of innocence and purity, intertwined Mike's finger with his.

Mike didn't have any reservations in holding Stan's hand. It was understood and perfect. Mike noticed the differences in their hands- Stan's fingers were long and thin, his nails were long and clipped perfectly. Mike's hands were calloused and his fingers were thick and stubby. Mike's nails had had dirt underneath them (from working that day) but he had washed them Before he had gone to Bill's for the night.

Stan noticed these differences too, but enjoyed them all the same.

The group of seven continued to laugh at Richie's outburst and the time had run out on the timer on Bev, Bill, and Ben's team so Richie, Eddie, Stan and Mike's team won the next point. Stan didn't know if

the others had noticed Mike and Stan's locked fingers and Stan thought that if the others had noticed that they wouldn't have cared. The group had played blissfully ignorant to Ben and Bev when Ben offered to walk her home or when Richie let himself be babied by Eddie.

The other five did notice either two friends and they did play ignorant because they were grateful when the other had for them.

It was when the losers had gone to high school when Stan and Mike first kissed.

It was cold in the winter and Mike was at Stan's house so he could have a haven from the snow slush that wasn't outside in the morning when Mike had biked to school. Stan and Mike were together in Stan's room- books stacked neatly on his desk or sitting in his bookshelf in alphabetical order, his pens in separate cups for color, there weren't any clothes on the floor (Mike was not the neatest of boys, he had shoes, shirts, and soil all over his floor).

Mike sat on Stan's bed and he thought of this guy. this friend of his that he was enraptured by. Mike knew it was meant to be wrong, but after seeing Richie and Eddie together it seemed clear to Mike that it couldn't be (and with a hypothetical conversation with his father Mike felt Better than anything- his father's words could soothe all of his anxieties).

Stan looked at his friend on his bed who was looking around his room. Whenever Stan thought of Mike in the way that he shouldn't he felt like his father was in the back of his mind but as soon as they started talking, when they sat next to each other and their knees bumped together, or when they held each other's hand all of Stan's thoughts stopped- even the good thoughts that helped Stan stopped because the thoughts of Mike are the good thoughts in Stan's mind.

They were together, Stan sitting with his legs crossed at the head of his Bed and Mike laying down horizontally at the foot of the bed but his head stayed turned to face Stan to stay in the conversation.

"Did you see Mr. Bales today? I think he seriously thinks the class is

haunted or possessed.”

“It’s ‘cause Richie keeps moving his stuff around when he’s not in the classroom. It’s his fault if he stupid enough to believe it.”

“Did you not see the way his eyes bulged when he saw his toy ghost was on the wrong side of his desk?” Mike paused to imitate his teacher’s eyes, his eyes widening so that most of the whites of his eyes could be seen. Stan laughed at the expression as Mike continued, “If he’s that paranoid I might not talk Richie out of it next time he flips all the desks over or something.”

Mike rolled over (and over again) so he was laying on his stomach and his chin was resting on Stan’s knee. Stan reached his hand out and pushed the front of Mike’s hair away from his face (although it didn’t mess up his hair much like it would on Stan). Mike closed his eyes at the touch and smiled.

Stan let his hand fall back into his lap where he held his own hand, his fingers interlocked so he didn’t take up much space. Mike, who had noticed Stan’s instinct behavior (one that Stan didn’t notice in himself) and instead laid his hands on top of Stan’s and squeezed Stan’s interlocked fingers. Stan grinned despite himself and opened his hands up to Mike so Mike could hold them.

“Hey Stanley?” Mike asked to get Stan’s attention (not like Stan’s attention wasn’t already on Mike) looking at their hands.

“Yeah Mikey?”

Mike licked his lips before he spoke again. “Um, do you like me?”

Stan’s eyebrows furrowed, then laughed a little. “Of course, I like you. I won’t let you in my room if I didn’t like you-“

“No, no, no, I mean, like, like-like me?” Mike leaned his head off Stan’s knee and removed his hands to sit up on his elbows. “I mean, do you like me like Ben likes Beverly? Or, you know what I can’t-“ Mike went to get up but Stan stopped him by putting his hand on Mike’s arm and pulling him back down on the bed.

“Can I-“ Stan stopped himself, “Can I do something?”

Mike sat straight up and crossed his legs like Stan and nodded. "Sure?"

Stan's mind was racing and he didn't know what he was thinking. Did Mike's question mean that Mike like-liked him? Or was it that Mike just wanted to know and that he didn't want anything to happen? Was Stan going to make a fool out of himself if he should tell the truth? Should he tell the truth? Stan had an idea and his mind could barely make words and he didn't trust his mind to explain to Mike they way Stan felt- even if he could find the words that would explain it.

Without Mike's hands to hold Stan rested his hands on his knobby knees and in an un-Stan like and unprecedented act of completely bravery Stan leaned forward and connected their lips. It was a quick peck; their lips had felt like they barely touched. Stan was scared of what his actions would result in so he didn't revel in the feeling of Mike's lips on his too much.

Mike leaned back, his eyes blown out. He took a gasp of a breath and looked over at Stan who could feel the tips of his ear becoming red with embarrassment. Mike laughed and put his hand on Stan's cheek and guided them back together again.

Mike's lips were soft on Stan's and Mike's hand was calloused on Stan's cheek. Stan leaned in more and laid his hand on Mike's upper arm and rubbed circles onto his skins with his thumb. Stan's lips were chapped (he had run out of lip balm a few weeks ago). It feels good? Better than either of them thought it would.

Mike had been thinking a lot about kissing Stan of the last few months. When school had started Mike and Stan had every class together (to the jealousy of the other five who had scattered classes with the losers) which meant that Stan and Mike spent every class, all of lunch, and worked on homework after school together, not that either of them minded too much (they both had loved the time spent together).

This all lead Mike to think about Stan and he thought about liking Stan. When it began to take a toll on his thoughts his father noticed how he hadn't been as present as Mike had been and asked him. That

lead to a talk about a “hypothetical” situation in which “someone” in town liked boys and his father talked about his support for this “someone”. After that was finished and done, Mike stopped hesitating when his mind began to wonder about the Jewish boy Stan Uris.

Stan thought of Mike too, especially how Mike, in the early parts of their freshman year, learned how to help Stan cope with his neatness and his fear of the dirt and grime that seemed like it surrounded Stan daily. Mike learned what set Stan off on his rants and his hand washing

(seven times a day, eight times on Wednesday)

and his book straightening and his color coding. Mike was quiet but he watched, he listened, he engaged. Mike learned about calming Stan down and what his safe spots were. Mike also listen to Stan talk about anything and everything. Stan talked about birds, and Judaism, and his father, and homework and he asks Mike to talk to him.

Then Mike talks about himself and allows himself to revel in the fact that not everybody asks to hear about Mike’s life. Mike talked about the farm, his family, his animals, the stuff he has on his property, and the chores his father sends him on sometimes during the off season. Mike talks about football and baseball and how he thinks he might try out for the school teams or he might bully Bill into trying out with him. Their friendship was support and admiration. And now that friendship become something more because friends don’t kiss each other on one of those friend’s beds.

Stan, feeling as if he had no air left in his lungs, pulled away from Mike, but kept his hand on Mike’s. “Y-yes.”

Mike, his brain a little scattered because the boy he’s had a crush on just kissed him, like *kissed* him, kissed him. “Huh?”

“Yes, I like you. Yes, I like-like you. Yes, I like you like Ben likes Beverly.” Stan wasn’t able to stop himself from smiling.

Mike breathed in deep and cleared his throat to try to ground himself (though he didn’t particularly want to). “Um, c-cool. Yeah, I like you too. Like-like you, I mean.”

“Cool.” Stan sighed. A weight lifted off his chest and he took a chance to himself- one that his intrusive thoughts couldn’t come into. He lifted his hand off Mike’s upper arm and trailed it down his forearm to his fingers and Stan interlocked them. Mike chuckled a little and used his thumb and index finger to play with the boney knuckles on Stan’s hand.

“Do you want to stay for dinner?” Stan asked, looking over at Mike’s face, in his eyes.

Mike smiled and nodded. “Can I kiss you again?”

Stan nodded and let himself be kissed by Mike. They were an odd pair, with Stan being iron pressed clothes and bleached shoes and Mike being dirty fingernails and grime covered bike wheels but they fit so perfectly- especially their hands and when they laid in Stan’s bed together or in the bed of Mike’s dad’s truck when they were on the farm. Their relationship balanced so perfectly, so much that Bev would later claim the boys were soulmates (after they decided to tell the losers about the relationship- like the losers needed to be told when Stan and Mike weren’t trying to be subtle).

Stan and Mike were happy, kissing each other on Stan’s bed, and that’s all that matters.